

Inclusion Focus Group

March 31, 2011

Activity 1: Inclusion Class Size

1. How many students should be enrolled in each Georgia's Pre-K inclusion classroom?
 - **18 to 20**
 - **18 to 20; ideally 18**
2. How would increased class size impact inclusion classrooms?
 - **Concerned about quality of program.**
 - **Number of students with an Individual Education Program (IEP) tends to grow over school year.**
 - **Sensory overload for some students.**
 - **With more students in classroom, space is an issue with walkers, equipment, etc.**
 - **Small group instruction will be different with more students.**
3. If the number of students in an inclusion classroom is increased to **20** students, how many general education students should be in the classroom, and how many students with IEPs should be in the classroom?
 - **6 students with IEPs, 12 to 14 without IEPs.**
 - **5 or 6 students at beginning, likely to build up to 6 to 8 students by end of year.**
 - **7 students with IEPs, 13 students without IEPs.**
4. If the number of students in an inclusion classroom is increased to **22** students, how many general education students should be in the classroom, and how many students with IEPs should be in the classroom?
 - **There should not be 22 students in an inclusion classroom.**
5. Please record additional thoughts or suggestions concerning class size in inclusion classrooms.
 - **Flexibility with enrollment requirements; start at 18 students, build up to 20 students by January 1.**
 - **Concerned about physical space with more students, 3 adults, and specialized equipment.**

Activity 2: Inclusion and the Shortened School Year

1. Should students with IEPs in inclusion classrooms be enrolled for more school days than their same aged peers? Please discuss and list suggestions for coordinating the difference in the number of school days for dually enrolled students.
 - **Systems can provide an extended school year for students with IEPs if they need it.**
 - **Concerns about what the law allows in regard to students with IEPs and the number of days they attend school.**
 - **IEP should not be written for a more restrictive environment.**

- **Concerns about what the law allows in regard to IEPs if students are placed in an inclusion classroom for 160 days and in a self-contained classroom for 20 days during a school year.**
2. Discuss and list suggestions for how local boards of education can use the special education teacher's additional work days.
 - **Special Education certificates generally allow for these teachers to be used in a variety of settings when the Pre-K school year ends.**
 - **Extended school year**
 - **Preplanning and postplanning between regular teachers and special education teachers**
 - **Student observations in the community**
 - **Staff development**
 - **Transition meetings**
 - **Universal screening on all Pre-K and/or K-5 students. (With DECAL approval, Pre-K screening is allowed with appropriate screener.)**
 - **Home visits**
 - **Writing IEPs**
 3. Due to the 10% pay reduction for Pre-K teachers, some teacher turnover is anticipated for the upcoming school year. Should there be additional training for new inclusion teachers? Please discuss and list suggestions for training that would support the inclusion staff.
 - **Joint training with lead, assistant, and inclusion teacher on how to collaborate.**
 - **Training at beginning of year and follow up throughout the year.**
 - **Extra mentoring/coaching, perhaps from Pre-K consultants.**
 - **Have a go-to person for technical assistance.**
 - **Webinars**
 4. Please record additional suggestions concerning Pre-K teachers, assistant teachers, and special education teachers employed in Pre-K inclusion classrooms.
 - **Webinars, conference calls with BFTS, Department of Education Preschool Special Education, and providers.**
 - **Improve Work Sampling Online for general education and special education teachers working together in inclusion classrooms.**
 - **Dedicated planning time needed.**

Other comments and suggestions:

- **Include Special Education Pre-K teachers in WSO focus group.**
- **For supplies, look at blended funding with inclusion.**
- **The duration of the service period on IEPs is an IEP team decision; Ga DOE does not require a specific school year length. FTE funding is likewise not based on length of school year. To provide free appropriate education, children with special needs should not be placed in a more restrictive classroom just to extend the calendar year.**

- 3 year olds with IEPs having a longer school year than 4 year olds with IEPs in the same building is a concern.
- Requested standardized calendar for all schools in a county.
- Programs are anticipating significant turnover of Pre-K teachers.
- Providers have to be intentional about hiring teachers early enough to attend any trainings scheduled before the school year starts.
- Head Start has trainings in July and August; perhaps can collaborate and use their trainings.
- Providers need flexibility with training dates.
- Mentor teachers are available to talk to teachers and visit classrooms.
- Concern about the Pre-K and Special Education staff having different calendars.
- Transportation concerns for students with IEPs if providers in the same county have different Pre-K calendars.